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IX.—A CONTRIBUTION TO THE STUDY OF THE *BEOWULF* CODEX

The Old English ms. volume, Cotton Vitellius A XV, in which the unique copy of *Beowulf* is preserved, consists of two separate codices which have been bound together since the time of Sir Robert Cotton to make the present volume. The first, in two main hands of the twelfth century, contains four articles: *Flowers from St. Augustine's Soliloquies*, translated by King Alfred, fol. 4a; *Gospel of Nicodemus*, fol. 60a; *Dialogue between Solomon and Saturn*, fol. 84b; and a fragment of eleven lines concerning martyrs, fol. 93b. The second codex, likewise in two hands, but of considerably earlier date, consists of five articles: A fragment of the *Life of St. Christopher*, imperfect at the beginning, fol. 94a; *Wonders of the East*, fol. 98b; *Letter of Alexander the Great to Aristotle*, fol. 107a; *Beowulf*, fol. 132a; and *Judith*, a fragment, fols. 202a-209b.

The first three tracts of this second codex, those which immediately precede the *Beowulf* epic, are clearly the work of a single scribe. Furthermore, and what is of greater interest, the script in which they are written is none other than the well-known first-hand of *Beowulf*. It has for some time been recognized that *Judith* and the second portion of *Beowulf* are written in the same hand, but until quite recently no notice has been taken of the fact that the first 1939 lines of *Beowulf* and the three articles immediately preceding the epic in the Cottonian codex are unquestionably the work of a single scribe. Prof. Sedgefield is the first to note¹ the identity of the

¹ *Beowulf*, 2nd ed., Manchester, 1913, p. xiv.

hand of *Alexander's Letter* and the first hand of *Beowulf*. Mr. Kenneth Sisam is the first to point out² that this identity extends also to the hand of both the *St. Christopher* fragment and the *Wonders of the East*, and that certain conclusions depend upon this fact.

This discovery of the identity of the scripts necessitates an important correction in certain accepted theories regarding the two *Beowulf* scribes. It is commonly held with ten Brink that "der zweite Schreiber des Beowulfs hat sich treuer an seine Vorlage gehalten als der erste," this conclusion being principally deduced from a comparison of the use of *io* and *eo* in the two parts of *Beowulf* and in *Judith*, which, it will be remembered, was written by the second *Beowulf* scribe. Too much reliance, however, must not be placed on such argument as ten Brink in this case adduces. A caution which Skeat once recommended in a similar type of criticism seems applicable here. The scribe of the Lindisfarne *St. John* begins, oddly enough, at chap. xx, verse 23, to write *gi* in place of the prefix *ge* which previously he had been consistently using—a phenomenon which in large measure parallels the interchange of *io* and *eo* in *Beowulf*. Of this Skeat remarks:³ "it is a peculiarly interesting point, as shewing that changes of spelling took place in the practice of the *same* scribe at different times of his life,"⁴ a hypothesis which opens out somewhat startling views, and shews the danger, and even the absurdity, of carrying out criticism, as obtained from internal evidence, in too rigid and narrow a manner." After this example of the Lindisfarne scribe,

² *Mod. Lang. Review*, xi, 335.

³ Gospel of *St. John*, p. x.

⁴ This implies, of course, no interruption in the scribe's work; but simply, as Skeat points out, that his orthography was in a transitional state.

who shall say that the second *Beowulf* scribe's confusion of *io* and *eo* is due rather to his faulty transcription of the *io* in his original, as ten Brink would have us believe, than to an uncertainty in his own mind of the correct mode of spelling? Of course, ten Brink's assumption is well within the realm of scribal possibility: the rarity of the *io*-spellings in the first part of *Beowulf* and the comparative frequency of such spellings in the second portion, is, indeed, indicative of some dissimilarity between the two scribes. Ten Brink, basing his view upon the absence of *io*-spellings from the 350 lines of the *Judith* fragment, comes to the conclusion that this dissimilarity is one simply of scribal accuracy, the second scribe being a more accurate, or, perhaps it were better to say, a less inaccurate, transcriber than the first. To maintain this contention, however, ten Brink is compelled to assume an earlier text with uniform *io*-spellings which served as the original of the extant copy of *Beowulf*. The more natural explanation of the *io*-spellings as an orthographic peculiarity of the second *Beowulf* scribe, is discarded by ten Brink in favor of his ingenious assumption of an *io*-original. And this, solely because *Judith*, with *eo*-spellings only, and part of *Beowulf*, with both *eo*- and *io*-spellings, were written by one and the same scribe.

Turning from the discussion of the relative accuracy of the two *Beowulf* scribes in the light of such a detail of internal evidence as ten Brink has pointed out, let us consider this relative scribal accuracy in the light of the evidence for the first time here presented. We have now for comparative purposes not only the *Judith* fragment but also — and in this we are more fortunate than ten Brink — the three texts immediately preceding *Beowulf*. A comparison of these three texts one with another and

each with the first 1939 lines of *Beowulf*, makes it clear, contrary to ten Brink's opinion, that the care and accuracy of the scribe is of a high order of merit.

It is not the purpose of this discussion to deal elaborately with the *Beowulf* problems that arise in connection with these three texts. Such a study would be a dissertation in itself, and must be reserved for another time and place. But the imputation of inaccuracy to our scribe can not, in face of his textual evidence, go unchallenged. Attention may be called, for example, to his consistent spelling *mit ty* or *myt ty* in one of his transcriptions (the *Christophorus* fragment), while in another (*Alexander's Letter*) he is equally consistent in his use of the form *mid þy*. Or, again, it may be observed that in one place he writes the various forms of the verb *cuman* preferably with the interpolated *w*, as in *cwom*, fol. 112b, l. 8; while elsewhere, as in *com*, fol. 96, l. 5, he omits the *w*. These, and other similar details which will come to the notice of the reader of the texts, are the result of no capricious use now and then of various forms of the same word. The confinement of one form to one place, and its variant to another, is scarcely favorable to ten Brink's theory. Details such as these, however, need hardly be discussed when the character of each text as a whole is taken into consideration. It seems highly improbable that the preservation of the plain West-Saxon of the *Christophorus* fragment and of the less simple language of *Alexander's Letter* with its Kentish and Anglian elements, could be the result of scribal carelessness. If anything, such differences between the texts indicate a commendable accuracy of transcription. Is it scribal faultiness, it may well be asked, which in the same hand produces two tracts each of which seems to independent critics to have different

linguistic color? Braun, for example, locates *Alexander's Letter* on the Kentish border and rejects the possibility of an Anglian original.⁵ Knappe, on the other hand, considers the immediately preceding piece, the *Wonders of the East*, as a West-Saxon reproduction of an Anglian version.⁶

Scribal inaccuracy might have been expected so to obliterate the distinctive features of the two pieces as to make such divergent opinions as those just quoted impossible. A scribe who preserves intact the linguistic peculiarities of three texts can scarcely be expected to substitute his own dialectal forms for the spellings before him in a fourth text. Still less probable will this appear when the resultant theory is as complicated as the one proposed by ten Brink. Scribe number two, he claims, was more accurate than his predecessor. The second half of *Beowulf* is therefore a truer copy than the first. The *io*-spellings of the second portion represent, accordingly, *io*-spellings in the original. The use of the diphthong *io*, however, is no criterion of dialect in itself. But the citation of a dozen Kentish forms from the text points to the *io* as a Kentish diphthong. "Erwägt man, dass die angeführten Formen—mit einer einzigen unerheblichen Ausnahme—sich alle nur in dem zweiten Teil des Beówulfs finden, wo auch die zahlreichen *ió* statt *eó* vorkommen, so wird man der Annahme, dass die Cottonhandschrift auf ein kentisches Manuskript zurückgehe, eine gewisse Wahrscheinlichkeit nicht absprechen können."⁷ But it is probable, ten Brink hastens to add, "Dass das kentische Manuskript nicht die unmittelbare Vorlage der Cottonhandschrift bildete, son-

⁵ *Lautehre d. as. Version d. "Ep. Alex."* p. 5.

⁶ *Die Wunder des Ostens*, p. 41.

⁷ *Beowulf: Quel. u. Forsch.*, LXII, 240. Cf. P. G. Thomas, *Mod. Lang. Review*, I, 207.

dern dass letztere zunächst auf einer älteren westsächsischen Handschrift beruhte.”⁸ And finally, the following paragraph begins with the sentence: “Die Urhandschrift unseres Beowulfs war aber jedesfalls wohl eine mercische.” Mercian, West-Saxon, Kentish, three dialects in all, are thus summoned to the aid of ten Brink’s theory. Significant indeed is the concluding statement: “Man möge von den in diesem Kapitel angestellten Untersuchungen halten was man wolle”—a sentence which the presumptuous critic of a ten Brink eagerly seizes upon and cites, rather for self-justification than for unbecoming ridicule.

Now, to the theory of ten Brink, as outlined above, two objections may be raised. In the first place, it is based upon too weak a foundation, the evidence of the *Judith* fragment being insignificant in comparison with the evidence of the three prose tracts; and, in the second place, it rejects a simple, common-sense explanation only to accept a complex solution which is by no means entirely satisfactory. Additional objections, moreover, which on no account may be dismissed as negligible, are offered by the scribal usages in the text of *Beowulf* itself. These, in part at least, will presently be analysed.

Before proceeding to this analysis, however, it seems advisable somewhat to elaborate our objection to ten Brink’s use of the *Judith* fragment in his estimation of the *Beowulf* scribes. In the first place, the total absence of *io*-spellings from the 350 lines of *Judith* is not necessarily indicative, as ten Brink claims, of careful scribal transcription. In fact, it is not at all unreasonable in such an instance as this to assume an elimination of all original *io*-spellings, if any there were, by a scribe to whom the

⁸ *Ib.*, p. 241.

eo-forms were the norm. This, indeed, is precisely the assumption made by ten Brink to account for the relatively rare occurrence of *io*-forms in the first portion of *Beowulf*. At all events, it is no more reasonable to come to one of these two conclusions, merely from the absence of a particular spelling, than to another. Taken together with the scribal peculiarities of the second part of *Beowulf*, it may however be urged, ten Brink's interpretation of the *Judith* spellings is quite acceptable. Indeed, were there no further textual comparison possible, his theory might have remained unchallenged. It so happens, however, that precisely those conditions which ten Brink advances in support of the accuracy of the second *Beowulf* scribe, are duplicated in the work of scribe number one. The *Christophorus* fragment, copied, it will be remembered, by him who transcribed the first 1939 lines of *Beowulf*, is, like *Judith*, characterized by the total absence of *io*-forms. Obviously, then, any argument in favor of the accuracy of the second scribe which ten Brink develops from the consistent use of *eo*-spellings in *Judith*, may with equal propriety be derived from the evidence of the *Christophorus* fragment in support of the accuracy of the first scribe. Such being the case, it is difficult to see how ten Brink's deduction can longer be accepted. The *Judith* evidence alone is certainly insufficient to establish the relative accuracy of the two scribes.

In a discussion elsewhere to appear of the varying dialectal characteristics of our three texts,⁹ still further indication of the comparative reliability of the two scribes will be arrived at by analysis of materials unused by ten Brink. If, however, our evidence be now limited to such as ten Brink himself might have used—such, that is, which the

⁹ Now in preparation for the E. E. T. S.

text of *Beowulf* itself provides—the conclusions will again be favorable to the contention herein sustained. The usage of the two *Beowulf* scribes in regard to the *io*-spellings, presented below for the sake of clearness in tabular form, was apparently unworthy of detailed analysis in ten Brink's opinion. Denoting by A, as is customary, that part of *Beowulf* which is preserved in the handwriting of the first scribe (ll. 1-1939), and by B the remainder of the text, we find the number of times by actual count that an *eo*- or an *io*-spelling occurs in either division is as follows:

	eo	eo	Total eo	io	io	Total io
A	479	329	808	5	6	11
B	247	249	496	88	27	115

Three of these totals differ from those given by P. G. Thomas,¹⁰ but, owing to his failure to indicate on what text he based his count, the discrepancies can not be here accounted for. Inasmuch as the present examination is concerned solely with the usages of the scribes themselves, as shown by their own handwriting, our count is made from the Autotypes of Zupitza, and designedly avoids the emendations of various editors.

From this table several conclusions may be drawn. The most apparent fact is the well-known infrequency of the *io*-forms in A, and their relatively extensive use in B. Of this there can be, of course, not the slightest doubt; nor does this in any material degree affect the bearing of the figures on our argument. What we would demonstrate is not that A and B show no characteristic differences, but

¹⁰ *Mod. Lang. Review*, I, 203: "... up to the point where the first hand ceases to appear ... there are but 11 examples of *io* as against 786 of *eo*. From this point to the end ... there are 117 examples of *io* as against 482 of *eo*. The total number of *eo* forms in *Beowulf* is thus 1268, of *io* 128." Prof. Klaeber tells me his count tallies with that in the above table.

that these differences, in view of the figures given, cannot be used in support of ten Brink's contention. The eleven instances of *io*-forms in A are the following:¹¹ *scionon*, 303; *hīo*, 455, 623; *gewiofu*, 697; *wundorsīona*, 995; *friofuwāre*, 1096; *hiora*, 1166; *giogoð*, 1190; *iogoþe*, 1674; *nīowan*, 1789; *hīo*, 1929. In an attempt to minimize the importance of these eleven words, ten Brink dismisses¹² the *io*-spelling of *giogoð* as "diakritisches Zeichen nach einem Palatal und vor o;" and maintains that *friofuwāre* "beweist natürlich nichts, da hier *i* und nicht *e* zu Grunde liegt."¹³ Inasmuch, however, as the spelling *geogoþ* occurs six times in A and once (2512) in B; and as various forms of *freoþu* are written with *eo* three times in A (188, 522, 1707) and twice (1942, 2959) in B; it is apparent that for our present purpose the words must be taken precisely as they come, with the scribes alone responsible for their spellings. Eleven, then, is the number of times the first scribe must be held accountable for *io*-forms, whether he copied them accurately from his original, whether lapsing occasionally into his accustomed manner he carelessly inserted them, or whether his orthography is due to a combination of these two possibilities. To no one cause can definitely be attributed either these eleven *io*-forms in A or the hundred-and-fifteen in B. It is only by corroborative evidence that a prejudice can be established in favor of one cause or another. If, as ten Brink would have us believe, the scribe of B can be shown

¹¹ Line references, throughout this discussion, are given as in Cook's *Concordance to Beowulf*.

¹² *Beowulf, Untersuchungen*, p. 238, note 1.

¹³ Sievers, likewise, (*Zschr. f. Deutsche Phil.*, xxi, 358) refers *gewiofu*,—"bei dem ersten Schreiber, der *io* nur als *u*-umlaut von *i*, nicht auch von *e* kennt",—to *gewif*. Here, however, as shown by the presence of *geogoþ* and *freoþu*, the question is one, not of phonology, but simply of scribal usage.

on other grounds to be more reliable than his predecessor, then the presumption that the *io*-forms are not "vom zweiten Schreiber in den Text eingeführt" may reasonably be made.

Such proof, however, is not forthcoming. The evidence, indeed, seems all to point the other way. The proportion of *eo*-forms, for instance, in both A and B is against ten Brink's contention. In A, there are 1939 lines, containing 808 *eo*-forms,—something less than 42 per cent. The proportion of *eo*-forms in the 1243 lines of B is practically the same,—a little over 39 per cent. This being the case, does it not seem less sound to credit B with fidelity to an original in which *io*-forms were the norm than to attribute the *io*-spellings, in large part at least, to the scribe's own orthographic idiosyncrasy? That this characteristic should disappear in *Judith*, is no insuperable difficulty. The absence of *io*-forms from this fragment may, as already pointed out, indicate either extremely careless reduction of all spellings to the scribal norm, or, on the other hand, it may be due to exactitude of transcription of an unusual order. The latter may quite possibly be the case. In *Beowulf*, it might be suggested, the second scribe was merely finishing up another man's work, and may well have been careless about it; while in *Judith*, a poem to be entirely transcribed by him, he may equally well have determined to proceed with all the care that good craftsmanship demands.¹⁴

¹⁴ In *Mod. Lang. Notes*, v, 44, Davidson tries to establish the inaccuracy of the scribe in both *Beowulf* B and *Judith*. His argument in opposition to ten Brink, based, as it is, on the scribe's use of þ and ð, is by no means so cogent as the analysis of the *eo*- and *io*-forms, but is given here as of supplementary value. The second scribe, he claims, is inaccurate not only in his insertion of *io*-forms into *Beowulf* B, but also in his reduction of nearly every þ to ð. The word *sippan*, for instance, variously spelt in A, occurs 18 times in

Less speculative deductions than this, however, may be made from the internal evidence of the last 1243 lines of *Beowulf*. If, with ten Brink, we choose not to question the accuracy of the second scribe, and if, likewise with him, we postulate an original manuscript characterized by *io*-spellings, how then are we to account for the numerous instances in B where *eo*- and *io*-forms of the same word occur side by side, with the former spellings not only often predominant but in some cases used exclusively? Assuredly it is not to scribal accuracy that so uncertain a usage may be attributed. The transcriber who writes three *io*- and fifteen *eo*-spellings of the common word *beorh*, in copying a manuscript in which the *io*-form was used, has little claim to be recognized as accurate. Throughout his text, as the following table will show, our scribe is guilty of just such uncertainties of spelling as are seen in the case of *beorh*. For purposes of condensation, com-

B, where it is invariably written *syððan*. Furthermore, says Davidson, "An examination of Cook's edition of 'Judith,' . . . fails to reveal a single þ and but one medial—öpre 109—in the 350 lines." "That this evident levelling of þ and ð to ö in B is the work of the scribe and not due to original differences in the text is . . . reasonably certain. . . . Indeed, the use of medial and final þ in B is so infrequent and of such a nature that it impresses one as an oversight in the copying of a manuscript in which þ was present."

In *Quellen und Forschungen*, LXXI, 103, this usage of ö is noted by T. G. Foster, who unhesitatingly accepts ten Brink's theory; but the accuracy of the second scribe is rendered questionable by the "remarkable" "mixture of forms" which Foster himself cites from *Judith*.

Before ten Brink had advanced his theory, Hornburg had said of the second scribe (*Archiv f. n. Sprachen*, LXXII, 384): "Eigentümlich ist demselben die ziemlich konsequente Setzung des io für eo und iö für eö; eigentümlich ist ihm ferner die Form telge für talige v. 2068, madelade [MS. mabelade] v. 2426, morna v. 2451, siex v. 2905, u. s. w. Wir sehen aus diesen Bemerkungen dass sich der zweite Abschreiber mit einer gewissen Selbständigkeit bewegt. Daraus folgt, dass er Verfasser etlicher Abschnitte im Gedichte sein kann."

pounds are indicated in our table by a dash either before or after the part of the word under consideration; and, where the citations would be too numerous, only the number of occurrences is recorded.

<i>eo</i> -forms in B	Line	Total	<i>io</i> -forms in B	Line	Total
beorg(e) (es)	3164 2529 2546 2559 2842 3143 2304 2322 2524 2580 2755	15	biorges biorgas	3066 2272	3
beorh	2241 2299 3097 2213		biorh	2807	
-beorh					
Bēowulf(e) (es)	2510 2207 1971	3	Biowulf(e) (es)		14
Egþēowes		5	Egþio(w)es		2
Eofores	2486	1	īofore	2992 2997	2
eom	2527	1			
eorl	16 x	23			
eorl-	7 x				
eorþ-	20 x	20			
ēow(ic) (etc)	7 x	7			
fēond-	4 x	4	fīonda	2671	1
fēores (um)	2 x	22			
feorh-	19 x				
-fēore	2664				
frēond-	2393 2377 2069	3			
freoþu-	1942 2959	2	frioþu-	2282	1
-bēodan	3110	1	hīodan	2898	1
-ēode (on)	8 x	8	-īode	2200	1
-hēold	16 x	16	hīold	1954	1
geogof	2512	2	gioguðe	2113	2
geogof-	2664		giogoðe	2426	
gēomor	2100 2419 2632	8	gīomor	3150	4

gēomor-	3 x		gīomor-	2267	
-gēomor	2239		-gīomor	2408	
	2950			2894	
geond	3 x	5	giond-	2771	1
geond-	2017				
	3087				
gēong	2019	3	gīong	2214	3
	2756			2409	
	3125			2715	
geong	10 x	10	gīong	2446	1
			hīo	8 x	8
			hiora	2599	1
heoro-	2720	1	hioro-	2358	3
				2539	
				2781	
-dēor	2107	3	dīor	2090	2
	2183		-dīor	3111	
	3169				
lēod-	36 x	36			
lēof-	16 x	17			
-lēofe	2863				
menigeo	2143	1			
nēos(i)an	2074	1	nīos(i)an	2366	5
				2388	
				2671	
				3045	
			nīosaþ	2486	
Ongenþeo(w)(es)	3 x	3	Ongenþīo(w)es	5 x	5
sēoc	2254	3	-sīocne	2787	2
	2740		-sīocum	2754	
	2904				
Swēona	2472	4	Swīo-	2383	2
	2958			2495	
	3001				
Swēo-	2922				
þēod(etc)	7 x	9	þīod	2219	2
-þēode	2204		þīod-	2579	
	2922				
þēoden(etc)	17 x	17	þīoden	3 x	3
beorn(etc)	2121	5	biorn	2559	2
	2148		biorna	2404	
	2220				
	2260				
	2433				
bēore	2041	1	bīor-	2635	1
dēop	2549	1	dīope	3069	1
dēore	2236	2	dīore	1949	1
	2254				

-drëorigne	2720	1	-drïore	2693	1
-sweord-	19 x	19			
geofum	1958	2	giofan (inf.)	2972	1
-geofa	2900				
sëo	3 x	3	sïo	16 x	16
þrëo	2298	1	þrïo	2174	1

The capricious usage shown by our table is by no means confined to a variation between *eo-* and *io-*forms. The scribe's accuracy is such, for example, that after writing *mergen* twice (2103, 2124) he can vary his forms at will as follows: *morna*, 2450; *morgne*, 2484; *morgenlongne*, 2894; *mergenne*, 2939; *morgenceald*, 3022. Similarly, to give but one more out of many possible examples, and to cite a word certainly familiar to any scribe, *meaht(e)(on)*, occurring fifteen times in B, is six times spelt *mihte(on)*. Few instances indeed can be noted in B where scribal accuracy is manifested by a consistent use of one spelling. Of *io*-forms occurring exclusively and more than once in B, only the words *hïo* (8 times), *bïo(þ)* (2063, 2747), and *Hior(o)te* (1990, 2099) may be found.¹⁵

In exoneration of the scribe whose accuracy is here called in question, it may perhaps be urged that the citations just given are at widely separated intervals in the text, and that no scribe, however careful, can in such instances be expected to spell with a modern uniformity. Such an expectation, admittedly, could be evidence only of unfamiliarity with manuscripts and their orthographic irregularities. It is, however, not at all unreasonable to expect that a scribe who, as in the present instance, is credited with faithful transcription of an original characterized by *io*-forms, should give greater evidence of accuracy than can be deduced from the above table. At

¹⁵ Consistent use of *io*-spellings is indicative of accuracy only when the scribe's original is assumed, as by ten Brink, to be one in which *io*-forms predominate.

the very least, it would seem fair to demand, so careful a scribe as ten Brink presents for our consideration should be consistent in his usage within the individual lines. If, in copying a text with *io*-spellings, he carefully preserve one correct form, certainly his reliability is not established by his failure in the selfsame line of verse to preserve another similarly correct form. Verse 2258, for instance,—*geswylce seo herepad sio æt hilde gebad*,—is but one out of thirty examples in B¹⁶ of both *io*- and *eo*-forms within a single line. Furthermore, the instances where *io*- and *eo*-forms occur so closely as in two consecutive lines of B, is no less than forty-seven—a singularly large number for a scribe whose preservation of original *io*-spellings is alleged as his chief characteristic.

If yet further evidence be required, the capricious interchange of *io* and *eo* in the spelling of proper nouns in B may be cited. The first occurrence of the hero's name in the handwriting of the second scribe is at line 1971, where it is spelled *Beowulfes*. A few lines further on, on the verso of the same folio, the spelling *Biowulf* occurs twice, lines 1987 and 1999. These are followed, line 2194, by another *io*-form, *Biowulfes*; and this, at so short an interval as thirteen lines, by the *eo*-form, *Beowulfe* (2207). The four subsequent spellings of the name (ll. 2324, 2359, 2381, 2425) are all written with *io*; then, at line 2510, comes the other form, *Beowulf*, after which the *io*-spelling is used, seven times, to the end. The same uncertainty as to form is shown by the scribe in his spelling of other proper nouns. The following three examples, given in the order of their appearance in the text, sufficiently illustrate this.

¹⁶ Cf. ll. 1946, 1987, 2018, 2127, 2174, 2219, 2336, 2367, 2408, 2425, 2486, 2559, 2599, 2663, 2681, 2693, 2710, 2842, 2883, 2892, 2913, 2931, 2951, 2961, 2972, 2999, 3142, 3150, 3169.

1999 Ecgðioes	1968 Ongenþeoes	2383 Swiorice
2177 Ecgðeowes	2387 Ongenðioes	2472 Sweona
2367 Ecgðeowes	2475 Ongenðeowes	2495 Swiorice
2398 Ecgðioes	2486 Ongenþeow	2922 Sweoþeode
2425 Ecgðeowes	2924 Ongenðio	2958 Sweona
2587 Ecgðeowes	2951 Ongenþio	3001 Sweona
	2961 Ongenðio	
	2986 Ongenðio	

Thus, from the evidence of the text itself, it is seen that a careful transcription of an original manuscript characterized by *io*-spellings can hardly be attributed to the second *Beowulf* scribe. If, indeed, such an original lay before him, the scribe's text is inaccurately copied. If, however, as we are inclined to believe, the prototype of our *Beowulf* text was not one in which *io*-spellings were predominant, then to the second scribe's orthographic prejudices must the *io*-forms in B be referred.

In one point, however, ten Brink's position is undeniably correct, and that point is that Cotton, Vitellius A XV, is not the original *Beowulf* text, but a transcription of an earlier copy. This is shown, if by nothing else, by the dissimilarity of the four pieces in the hand of the first *Beowulf* scribe. Obviously, when two texts such as the *St. Christopher* fragment and *Alexander's Letter* are markedly different in linguistic features, and are written by a single scribe, that scribe is not composing but simply copying. And the improbability of the scribe's having copied out three pieces and then having proceeded to write an epic of his own, is so great as to be unworthy of serious consideration. That there existed an earlier copy of *Beowulf* than that in the Cotton manuscript, may, therefore, be unhesitatingly accepted.

That this copy, however, was one in which *io*-spellings were consistently used, has yet to be demonstrated. In fact, according to Möller,¹⁷ ten Brink's position in regard

¹⁷ *Englische Studien*, XIII, 314. Cf. T. G. Foster, *Quellen und For-*

to this point is entirely wrong. From an analysis of the use of *o* and *a* before nasals, supplemented by other linguistic considerations, Möller arrives at the conclusion that lines 1945-3183 of *Beowulf* are quite independent in origin from the preceding verses. This conclusion, owing to the type of data on which it is founded, can not be accepted and made use of without a certain degree of caution; nor can that particular point of the epic where, according to Möller, a junction of parts has apparently been effected, be definitely located at a specific verse. Möller's criticism of ten Brink, sicklied o'er, as it is, with a determined but unconvincing attempt to establish the originally strophic form of the *Beowulf* epic, is valuable, not so much for its advocacy of the *Strophentheorie*, as for the support it gives to ten Brink's hypothesis that *Beowulf* is a *Gesammtredaction* made from two distinct versions of the *Beowulf* story. Accepting this part of the theory, Möller challenges ten Brink's conclusions, and pronounces the assumption of a Kentish redaction of *Beowulf* to be as unnecessary as failure to attribute the *io*-forms to the second scribe is unreasonable. The arbitrariness with which division of the epic is necessarily made in an investigation of this kind, together with the limitations inherent in the method, lessen to some extent the significance of the conclusions. The results of Möller's analysis are none the less of value; and, if taken for what they are worth, are of no little interest in the controversy as to the relative reliability of the scribes of *Beowulf*. The lines 1945-3183, set apart by Möller as of independent origin, are, it will be observed, curiously coincident with the transcription made by the second scribe. Five lines

schungen, LXXI, 51 ff. Foster's dismissal of Möller's conclusion on the ground of "unsettled orthography" is an unwarrantable evasion of the argument.

only from the preceding portion of the poem are in his hand. The practical identity, fortuitous no doubt, of *Beowulf* B and Möller's final independent section, has its own significance,—particularly when considered in conjunction with his theory as to the component parts of the epic. When these were put together, Möller's evidence would seem to show, to form the *Gesammtredaction*,—the basis, apparently, of the surviving text,—the characteristics of the originally independent parts were largely preserved. Thus, from line 1943 to the end, certain peculiarities, such as the frequently occurring *io*-diphthong, mark the text. From this fact, however, if Möller's conclusions have any weight, it is impossible to establish anything at all concerning the preceding lines of the poem. Neither the character of the original text of lines 1-1944 nor the nature of the first *Beowulf* scribe's transcription can be judged in the light of data found in the second portion. Ten Brink's assumption, accordingly, of an *io*-original unfaithfully copied by the first scribe, is, for this further reason, seen to be untenable. For the second scribe, and for him only, an *io*-original might with some justification be predicated. Möller's deductions, however, eliminate any resultant estimation of the characteristics of scribe number one.

Furthermore, that the original of our sole remaining copy of *Beowulf* was, as ten Brink claims, but one of several earlier copies in various dialects, seems again, in the light of Möller's examination, a needless hypothesis.¹⁸ Möller, dating both the *Gesammtredaction* and the two versions from which it was made, in the tenth century, practically eliminates the possibility that still other later

¹⁸ This statement, of course, is not intended to rule out an Anglian copy.

copies served as originals from which the two *Beowulf* scribes made their transcription. Ten Brink's assumption of more than one such original was, moreover, necessitated by his faith in the accuracy of the second scribe. From the evidence already presented, that to the scribe himself rather than to a hypothetical original must be attributed those characteristics of *Beowulf* B which led ten Brink into his complicated theory, it is clear that postulation of a Kentish *Beowulf*-version is no longer satisfactory. This, from the preceding argument; this, too, from Möller's investigation. The two conclusions corroborate each other. Between the *Gesammtredaction*, then, and the version in MS. Cotton Vitellius A XV, there is no ground to assume any intermediate copies.

Summing up the evidence of the preceding pages, we can come to but one conclusion. The scribe of A gives conclusive textual proof of his accuracy. The second scribe, on more than one ground, gives equally certain proof of his unreliability. The evidence of scribal accuracy drawn from *Judith* is counteracted by the opposing evidence of the *Christophorus* fragment. In the place of an hypothesis so complex as to compel immediate skepticism, can be substituted a simple, straight-forward, common-sense explanation. In view of all these points, that judgment which ten Brink passed upon the first 1939 lines of *Beowulf* must necessarily be abandoned; and, of the two portions of the ancient epic, that part which is written in the hand of the initial scribe must indeed be considered the more faithful reproduction of the original copy.

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